

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

# FSIS NOTICE

15-01

4/24/01

## INSPECTION FOR RATITES

### What is the purpose of this notice?

This notice announces that the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) intends to incorporate ratites in its mandatory poultry inspection regulations and eliminate such inspection from the Agency's voluntary poultry inspection program.

### What is a “ratite”?

A “ratite” is a large, flightless bird, of either sex, that has small or rudimentary wings, and that is tender to medium tender-meated with a flat breast bone. The meat has an even red color with no intermuscular fat (i.e., marbling). For inspection and labeling purposes, ratites are generally considered to be a superordinal group of birds that includes ostriches, emus, and rheas.

### Why is ratite inspection mandatory?

The FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations Act, signed by the President on October 28, 2000, declared that 180 days after the date of its enactment, U.S. establishments slaughtering or processing ratites for distribution into commerce as human food will be subject to the requirements of the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA) rather than the voluntary poultry inspection program under section 203 of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946.

### What is the Agency policy regarding ratite slaughter and processing?

- A. Effective April 26, 2001, establishments processing ratites will be inspected pursuant to the PPIA.
- B. Inspection under the regulations is required at every establishment as described in § 381.6.

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C. All parts of the FSIS regulations (9 CFR) that apply to poultry will be applicable to ratites unless as otherwise specified in the regulations or in this Notice.

**What establishment operator's responsibilities do FSIS inspection program personnel need to verify?**

A. Make application to the District Office for inspection service in accordance with § 381.16 and FSIS Directive 5220.1;

B. Comply with all parts of 9 CFR applicable to poultry except as provided in the regulations or in this Notice;

C. Develop, maintain, and adhere to written sanitation standard operating procedures (Sanitation SOP's) that comply with 9 CFR part 416; and

D. Implement HACCP systems to address food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in their operations in accordance with 9 CFR part 417.

**What are the FSIS inspection program personnel responsibilities?**

A. Enforce mandatory poultry inspection requirements of the PPIA;

B. Provide necessary inspection as per § 381.7; and

C. Ensure that ratite products are wholesome, not adulterated, and properly labeled in accordance with applicable provisions of 9 CFR parts 381, 416, and 417.

**Are there any inspection activities specific for ratites?**

A. All applicable inspection procedures described in FSIS Directives 5400.5, Inspection System Activities, and 5000.1, Enforcement of Regulatory Requirements in Establishments Subject to the HACCP System Regulations, will be conducted in the inspected establishment.

B. All of the ante-mortem and post-mortem procedures described in the Ratite Slaughter Inspection Guidelines dated October 30, 1995, are applicable (See Attachment 3).

C. Inspection program personnel will verify that the establishment employs operating procedures that are necessary for chilling and freezing ready-to-cook ratites, including all edible portions thereof, to ensure the prompt removal of the bird heat, preserve the condition and wholesomeness of the ratite, and ensure that the products are not

adulterated. Inspection program personnel will also verify that ratite washing, chilling, and draining practices and procedures must minimize water absorption and retention at

time of packaging. FSIS has published an Interim Final Rule to amend its Poultry Chilling Requirements to specify that § 381.66 (a) and (d)(1) are applicable to ratites, and that other parts of § 381.66 are not applicable.

D. Inspection program personnel are not to condemn any carcass of a ratite accidentally contaminated during slaughter with digestive tract contents if the carcass is promptly reprocessed under the supervision of inspection program personnel and thereafter found not to be adulterated. FSIS has published an Interim Final Rule to amend its regulations to specify that ratites will be exempted from the portion of § 381.91(b)(1) describing reprocessing by washing.

E. Inspection program personnel will verify that establishment employees apply the official inspection legend on inspected and passed ratite products according to § 381.96. They are to apply the official brand to inspected and passed carcasses and parts of carcasses of ratites that are shipped unpacked. If carcasses are branded, the brand needs to comply with the provisions of § 381.96. Hot brands or ink (blue) brands may be used.

F. In support of the pathogen reduction (PR) initiative, FSIS intends to conduct baseline surveys for establishing performance criteria to reflect the prevalence and levels of contamination of *Escherichia coli* and performance standards for *Salmonella* on ratite carcasses produced nationwide.

#### **What are the changes in administrative procedures and practices?**

A. Inspection program personnel inspecting ratites are to use new program codes (Note: Program codes are referred to as management codes in previous FSIS Directives and Notices). FSIS must account separately for the cost of inspecting ratites; therefore, there are unique program codes to be used on time and attendance records, travel vouchers, and Form 5110-1. Attachments 1 and 2 provide a listing of these unique program codes to be used effective April 26, 2001. Attachment 1 provides the reimbursable codes to be used when both the establishment and inspection program personnel are on overtime, and the establishment is to be billed for inspection services using a Form 5110-1. Attachment 2 provides the appropriated codes for the standard 8-hour shift for ratite inspection. On time and attendance records, any ratite inspection activity should be recorded regardless of duration, in a minimum of ¼ hour increments. For a complete explanation of the completion of Time and Attendance Records, refer to FSIS Directive 3530.4, "Time and Attendance Reporting."

B. Ratite establishments will no longer be billed for the cost of inspection, except when both the plant and inspector are on overtime as is the case for other species under the mandatory inspection program. (Refer to the "Reimbursable Services Guide" FSIS Directive 5110.1 for additional information as to billing for overtime services.)

Therefore, effective April 26, 2001, inspection program personnel in ratite establishments will no longer be completing Form 5110-1 for their standard 8-hour shift for purposes of billing the establishment for inspection services.

### **Will there be any port-of entry activities?**

A. All countries that want to export ratite product to the United States may do so for an 18-month period beginning April 26, 2001, subject to the following conditions. Countries that are already eligible to export poultry may export ratite product to the United States if they certify the ratite establishments. Countries that are eligible to export meat but not poultry may export ratite product to the United States if they certify the ratite establishments and they submit a request for poultry equivalence. Countries that are not eligible to export either meat or poultry may export ratite product to the United States if they submit a request for poultry equivalence and work with the Agency to satisfy any issues that might arise during the 18-month period.

B. After the 18-month period ends, all ratite product must come from eligible countries and be accompanied by an FSIS poultry health certificate and be presented for FSIS reinspection. No ratite product needs an FSIS poultry health certificate or needs to be presented for FSIS reinspection until after the 18 month-period ends.

### **Whom do inspection program personnel contact for further guidance?**

For questions concerning this notice, please contact the Director, Inspection and Enforcement Standards Development Staff (IESDS) at telephone (202) 720-3219 or write to the following address:

USDA, FSIS, OPPDE, IESDS  
300 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Room 202 Annex  
Washington, DC 20250

/s/ Philip S. Derfler

Deputy Administrator  
Office of Policy, Program  
Development and Evaluation